631 of Travancore and the Travancore legislative assembly, with headquarters in the capital, Trivandrum. On July 1st, 1949, by order of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi, the two southern states were integrated as the United States of Travancore and Cochin. The Maharaja of Cochin retired from office, and the Maharaja of Travancore became for the duration of his life the first Rajpramukh of the new united state. The State now has its headquarters and government offices [5] at Trivandrum.

101 Despite these partly accidental political divi-
197 sions, the Malabar Coast is a discrete cultural area. Malayalam, (a Dravidian language strongly influenced in vocabulary by Sanskrit) which became distinguished as a deviant dialect of Tamil about the twelfth century, is the mother-tongue of all but a few immigrant Tamil groups in south Travancore. The area has also had some degree of political unity in the distant
174 past as the ancient kingdom of Kerala. The early history of Kerala is unknown; It was ruled by the Perumals, a succession of kings who seem to have come from outside Kerala and who may have been feudatories in the wider em-
175 pire of Chera. Their government came to an end sometime between the fourth and eleventh centuries A.D. After this Kerala was split into many petty kingdoms under indigenous Rajas of Nayar stock, having matrilineal descent. These continually fought each other and, from 1498, with the coming of the Portuguese and later the Dutch, English and French, made various alliances with these powers to gain their

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

Pandya, appears to have grown powerful on the basis of trade with Rome. Like Chola and Pandya, it was a Tamil kingdom; Malayalam, the modern language of Kerala, did not diverge from Tamil until about the tenth century (Sastri, 1955: 400). It is clear from the Tamil literature of the Sangam period that the basic features of Kerala's division of labor, caste system and village organization, must have developed during or before the Chera period (*ibid.*: 110–140). The three South Indian kingdoms temporarily disintegrated in the late third century, probably as a result of a sharp decline in Roman trade.

There is no mention of any matrilineal caste like the Nayars in the Chera kingdom. When and whence they came is uncertain. The most plausible suggestion is that during the Chera period they were a matrilineal hill tribe occupying the Ghats under chiefs who owed a tenuous allegiance to the Chera kings. They may have descended to the Kerala plains as invading barbarians about the fourth century, when the Chera kingdom collapsed (Ayyar, 1938: 43). Little is known of Kerala between the Chera period and the thirteenth century. All or a part of it passed under the rule of a succession of viceroys (Perumals) from various South Indian kingdoms to the east of the Ghats. The date of the last Perumal is quite uncertain. Many writers concur in placing him in the early ninth century, but he may possibly have lived as late as the thirteenth. Nayar chiefs and Nayar soldiers are first mentioned in three copperplate inscriptions, tentatively dated late seventh, mid-eighth, and early ninth centuries. The inscriptions record grants of land and judicial privileges on the coast to settlements of Jewish and Syrian Christian traders (Logan, 1887, I: 265). The grants were made by rulers of Kerala, presumably Perumals, and were witnessed by Nayar chiefs of Venad, Ernad, Walluvanad, and Palghat. All these districts were famous Nayar chiefdoms in the later periods and persisted until the eighteenth century. The plates suggest that Nayar chiefs with private armies had emerged as vassals of the Perumals at least by the ninth century. By the mid-thirteenth century, at the latest, the greater Nayar chiefs had become independent small kings, and the Perumals had disappeared.

Chinese had resumed trade with Kerala sometime in the Perumal period, and in the thirteenth century this trade greatly expanded under the empire of Kubla Khan. Concomitantly, two coastal Nayar chiefdoms with strategic ports expanded into small kingdoms by conquering the surrounding inland chiefdoms and monopolizing their trade. In the north was the Kolattiri kingdom centered about Mount Eli, and in the south the kingdom of Travancore or Venad, centered

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

585 184 six months," and a reply is given in the terms "Be it so". Thus, the permission of the senior lady of the bride's family is asked and given to the bridegroom to visit the bride for a period of six months.

[556] The young men of some aristocratic families who wish to perform *sambandham* have the brides brought to them on an auspicious day without any formal ceremony, and henceforth look upon them as their wives.

585 [586] [581] The union is generally effected with the mutual consent, but is terminable at the will of either party. Practically, a marriage thus effected is, in the majority of instances, found as happy and enduring as others more formal and ceremonial.

The following is the account given by the late Mr. Chandu Menon of the ceremonies constituting the marriage among the Nayars of Malabar. It is quoted here, because it is a typical description which covers all forms of the union :—

585 192 197 "*Sambandham* is the principal Malayalam word as *vivâham* is in Sanskrit. Whatever may be the *sambandhams* of the *marumakkathâyam* Nayars, there can be no doubt that the idea which the word conveys to a Malayali is the same as the word *vivâham*. The generic term, *sambandham*, which, in South Malabar between Calicut and Nedunganad, and in Ponnani, Cochin, and parts of Travancore, is the old name to denote marriage includes—

1. *Guna dósham* as used in South and North Malabar.

2. *Pudamuri* or its Sanskrit synonym for *Vastradânam* used in South Malabar.

3. *Uzhamporukkuka*, and *Vidâram Kairuga* of North Malabar.

4. The *Kidakkóra kalyânam* of Palghat and parts of Nedunganád.

Pudamuri, Vastradânam, Uzhamporukkuka, Vidâram Kiaruga are local expressions hardly understood beyond the localities in which they are used, but there would hardly be a Malayali who would not really understand what is meant by *sambandham thudanguka* (to begin *sambandham*). The meaning of this phrase which means "to marry" is understood throughout the Keralam in the same way, and there cannot be any ambiguity about it.

585 184 It is thus found, that *sambandham* is the principal word denoting marriage among the *marumakkathâyam* Nayars. It

121 611 564 complex, contradictory, and difficult material collected by many authors, and, second, to test the Ceylon model of the association of hypergamy with unilineal descent. It will be recalled that Gough's Kumbapettai village seemed to include the variations in kinship found dispersed over a large area in Ceylon. On the Malabar coast, the situation is, if possible, made even more complicated: in this famous region we find every possible variation of our model, from matrilineal hypergamous systems to endogamous and patrilineal hypergamous systems, all existing pell-mell in the same area. In general, it seems clear that these various features are used as structural indices to distinguish communities from one another. The over-all pattern, by contrast, seems uncluttered: in lower levels of social rank we find, on the whole, endogamous castes which so far as the material goes exhibit the fundamental characteristics of the general structure. In the higher levels of Hindu and Muslim society we find an intense preoccupation with status and social rank, and unilineal descent systems are built out of the general structure. Then, in the limiting cases, each matrilineage behaves as if it were a single unique caste having only hypergamous connections with the outside world.

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In this section, I shall first attempt to establish the existence of the general structure in castes in both North and South Malabar, and I shall then go on to examine the questions of descent and hypergamy. Before we come to specific cases, I should observe that the region exhibits an impressive general cultural uniformity: the language, Malayalam, is very closely related to Tamil; the details of the customs find immediate echoes not only in the material from the rest of South India but among Buddhists in Ceylon as well. Quite apart from structural matters, there is an intuitive appreciation of the fact that we are in a civilization with a distinctive style of its own in which the different customs of discrete groups appear as permutations and combinations of the same set of general ideas.

[197] [171] [184]

101 564 The term Nayar covers a motley collection of categories of people. Primarily, they are aristocratic Nayar descended from the important royal houses of Cochin and Travancore. There are also people of servant castes who have allegedly taken on the Nayar title in the last century and are only Nayar by courtesy. Some of these categories may be fully endogamous and others, at the higher levels, hypergamous. Though there are again uniformities, it is important to specify which group of Nayar are being considered. The word *taravad*, used by various castes in Malabar, denotes a group of matrilineally related persons with the same name who observe rules of exogamy. The *taravad* may be split into smaller property-holding groups, each with a head *Karanavan*.[7]

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[7] "One who 'acts' ": comp. *Karanava*, "to do" in Sinhalese.